

Sociology 0150
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Notes recorded by Patty Tran

Marx on alienated labor

One's work is not one's own → for someone else (capitalist)

Work is not "natural"

Loss of self through labor

More workers produce, the less workers "are"

More energy to other, the less the *self*

Work is compelled, "forced labor"

Wage slave

Marx theorizes social stratification, provides a class analysis of labor relations & work

****alienation, alienated labor**** key concept from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

→ separation

Alienated labor – the thing that makes us the most human (our ability realize ourselves, be engaged in a productive process) is what is most taken away from workers under capitalist social relations of production

- especially alienated under capitalist social relations of production

alienated labor causes private property (p. 41)

private property owned by capitalist → "means of production" (machines, space, ownership of intellectual property, money, raw materials)

small # of people own means of production, large # don't own

political economy is the traditional or neo-liberal or mainstream account of work, labor, wealth, and the economy – people in favor of capitalism – private property causes alienated labor, people who have means and capital should get more \$... hiring others doing them a favor

4 aspects of alienated labor (pp. 36-39):

1. from the product as an object
2. from producing as an active process
3. from species-being
4. from each other

Marx is engaged in criticism of the social world.

Marx is eager to restore the dignity of labor; the means for doing so is the revolution of the proletariat.

Marx is not talking about the subjective experience of alienation, but the objective social relations that result in alienated labor.

Exploitation (different from alienation)

1. gap between what something is sold for and what it cost to make it
2. gap between person's labor power/value & wage

Dialectical materialism at work in Marx:

thesis: capitalism produces, enhances, builds means of production

antithesis: it is bad, creates set of negative social relations

synthesis: revolution in social relations

We split into two halves of the group and did an informal writing exercise for thinking about the relevance of Marx in the present.

Marx's analysis of alienation still applies:

- job still dictates "class"
- workers still anonymous, alienated from product

Marx's analysis of alienation is dated or has been overtaken by events:

- Stock options mean we're all capitalists now
- Service workers
 - no tangible product
 - contact with people may be intrinsically rewarding

Ask yourselves as you read: What's characteristically Marxist about a given argument?